

Today is World Health Day, which marks the founding of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948. This year, the focus of World Health Day is antimicrobials, the medicines are used to treat infectious diseases. These include antibiotics, chemotherapeutic agents, antifungals, antiparasitic medicines, and antivirals. For more information about the World Health Organization and World Health Day, please visit <http://www.who.int/en/>.

World Health Day reminds us of our shared responsibility as a global community to promote healthy practices and protect public health. As we strive to achieve equitable access to essential care in this country through comprehensive health care reform, we must be cognizant of the fact that our health decisions, and the health decisions of others, affect our communities, nation, and world as a whole.

The discovery of antimicrobials some 70 years ago is one of the most important developments in the history of human health. Antimicrobials alleviate suffering, save countless lives, and help keep health care costs down.

Of particular concern is the rise of antimicrobial resistance, which has resulted in greater numbers and types of microorganisms resistant to these medicines. The misuse of antimicrobials in human medicine and animal husbandry leave us susceptible to so-called 'superbugs,' highly resistant diseases that can spread quickly. Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), avian influenza (bird flu), and H1N1 (swine flu) are recent reminders of pandemic outbreaks. Antimicrobial resistance threatens our ability to treat these diseases and ensure global health.

I support the World Health Organization's six-point policy package for all countries to combat antimicrobial resistance, which includes committing to a comprehensive, national strategy; increasing data collection and laboratory capacity; ensuring uninterrupted access to essential, quality medicines; promoting the rational use of medicine and proper patient care; reducing the use of antimicrobials in food-producing animals; enhancing infection prevention and control; and supporting further innovation and research. I will continue working with my colleagues in Congress, as well as our friends and partners around the world, to reduce antimicrobial resistance and improve the health and well-being of all people.